

land and Scotland are such a mine; they are full of the explosive fire damp of intemperance. In all societies it hangs dense around us in the perilous and pestilential air. Do not say that there is none of this flaming peril around you; that you may open your safety-lamp and no harm come of it. It may be so, it may not be so. You could not, you would not, do it if you were *sure* that there was danger; for that—as you see at once—would be a deadly selfishness and an atrocious crime. But you cannot be sure that there is *not* danger. Is the gain worth the risk? Is the transient and animal indulgence worth the permanent and eternal peril? No harm may come to you; but if harm comes to others who are re-assured by your example, you, even you, will have helped to perpetuate a frightful curse, whose effects, in shattering blast after shattering blast, shall be slapped in echoes of ruin and of misery, too late for penitence, amid generations yet unborn.—*From an address by Canon Farrar.*

THE POISON OF A SNEER.

Of all the forms of evil influence that of sneering at religion on the part of young people is perhaps most mischievous, and especially so, where they are supposed to have been born and bred in Christian families. Not only is a sneer inspired by a more subtle form of depravity than ordinary unbelief, but it weighs more with the young, with far less reason. An argument against religion counts for so much, according to the weight of it; and when it is inspired by honest doubt, there is supposed to be a certain manliness about it which becomes a redeeming feature in one's lack of faith. But a sneer is as likely as anything to be a pure piece of prejudice and malignity. It does not imply any sincere and intelligent thinking, and still less any respect for the sincere and intelligent thinking of others. It is utterly void of a good impulse or motive, and seems to be a pure excitation of the devil. Wherein, then, lies the mischief of it? In this: that it instils its poison through the medium of ridicule before which young people so easily wither. A sneer is usually conceived under some expression which is laughable; and in a smart, contemptuous, reckless speech which sets the company in a roar, one may do more harm than he could do in arguing for a week. Indeed, in nine cases out of ten, if a young person would but reason about the thing at which he sneers, he would only prove how little his words and opinions are entitled to any weight whatever.

To say nothing about the mischief which is done in this way among those young people who have more or less respect for religion as connected with our Sunday schools and churches, it is believed that this habit of sneering is the most potent instrument of evil with persons of similar age connected with printing and manufacturing establishments. It is well known that such persons, to say nothing of their elders, have, as a rule, perhaps little or no respect for the institutions of religion. Well, how did they come by it? Are they especially read and qualified to argue in matters of this sort? They would make no such pretensions. But that is a rare establishment in which there is not some witty, tonguey, reckless person who is always raising a laugh at the expense of Christian people. He "gets off" such epithets and oddly biting and profane expressions that they have all the weight of knock-down arguments. And yet they are not arguments at all, but only bitter, malignant words, spiced with wit, or with what passes for such in the company. Let young people be carefully guarded against such a habit as this, whether they would influence others, or suffer from their influence. If they must pass through the period of doubt and misgiving, be it so. But caution them against that malign, Satanic spirit which would instil the poison of a sneer, where it is void of knowledge, and kill by ridicule, when it could not harm by reason.—*The Church Sunday-school Teacher's Weekly.*

THE OBJECT OF THE MINISTER'S WORK.

The great work of the ministry is to declare the perfect reconciliation of God to man accomplished. God has announced complete forgiveness through the Saviour's death, complete cleansing through the perfect obedience of Christ. What a work is this! Who has ever risen to the majesty of its meaning? No words can do justice to it, no learning, no eloquence. No epic poem can reach the heights of its grandeur. The minister's message is the announcement of

what God has done. His object is to bring men to accept this finished work. By the death of Christ, communion with God is made possible. Men are now urged to make it actual. God is reconciled. *Be ye reconciled.* The appeal is made immeasurably urgent by the greatness of the work already accomplished. All themes which relate to real life are within the preacher's range, but all as they are connected with the sacrifice of Christ. His death touches every act and every feeling of a saved man. His death gives Him a claim on every thought and every movement of every man. He died for all, that they which live should, every moment in the whole range of their conscious being, live not unto themselves, but unto Him. The minister's usefulness will be in proportion to the clearness with which he apprehends this supreme truth. When it is vividly felt, it will pervade his spirit. It will influence his manner, his choice of words, the tones of his voice. The devotion of Dr. Judson to his missionary work in Burmah is an illustration of the power of this single motive intensely realized. His whole life was a seeking after that people to bring them to God. It is said that one day, during an excursion up one of the rivers, while the vessel was lying at the shore, he walked a short distance up the bank. He met a heathen woman of high caste. His one object, ever uppermost in his mind, impelled him to address her. He could not speak a word of her language. But he silently approached her, with glowing face and moist eyes, gently pressed her hand, pointed upwards, turned and walked back to the boat. Soon after she met a native, and said, "Brother, I have seen an angel of God."

Ministers who have been successful according to the divine standard, have so longed for the salvation of men that this desire has penetrated their whole being. Said David Brainerd, "I cared not how or where I lived, or what hardships I went through, so that I could but gain souls for Christ. When I was asleep I dreamed of these things; and when I waked, the first thing I thought of was this great work." Of Joseph Alleine it is said that "he was constantly and insatiably greedy of the conversion of souls; and to this end he poured out his very heart in prayer and preaching." But if the requirements of his office are so great, how great his need of help! The more deeply he enters into the spirit of his work, the more keenly he realizes his deficiencies. Sometimes the distance between his actual condition and the ideal set forth in the Scriptures almost crushes him. The immense amount of work to be done, the fact that the vast results which God proposes hinge on human efforts, almost paralyze the mind, to which it is disclosed. Even the great apostle, again and again, oppressed with the burden of his responsibilities, bursts forth with the petition, "Brethren, pray for us!" What need of prayer by the churches, if they would have their ministers sustained as God's messengers of mercy to men!

The minister's authority is not merely as a neighbour or a Christian friend, but as an appointed messenger of the Lord Jesus Christ he comes to men. "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us." *The Rev. A. E. Dunning, in Sermons by the Monday Club.*

THE GOSPEL TRUTH.

Among the favourite methods of depreciating the plenary inspiration of Scripture now common is that of magnifying the authority of Christ's personal teaching above that of His apostles. "I take Jesus' own words as my guide," some are saying, "and not His doctrine as expounded by Paul or Peter or John." The assumption is especially dangerous, from the fact that it is so specious. It seems to exalt Christ by giving to Him a solitary eminence as a teacher. Such eminence is truly His. But He himself has fixed the authority of His apostles as teachers of divine truth; and we cannot lower their authority without directly denying Christ's own words. He expressly declared that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, whom He would send forth into the world after His departure, His apostles should be led farther into the knowledge and utterance of the truth than under his earthly teaching. To His disciples He said, "I have yet many things to say unto you; but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." With this saying before him, who can say that the teachings of the inspired apostles after the ascension were less authoritative

than those of Christ? Who will presume to declare that they might not go farther than the Master had done in the unfolding of gospel truth? Surely it is impossible to magnify Christ's authority while denying His teaching in regard to the development of doctrine under His apostles.

WHO IS CHRIST?

The Christian world was a few years since taken by surprise at the enlightened sentiments publicly and boldly avowed by Baboo Keshub Chunder Sen, an educated native of India, and one of the founders of the new sect of the Brahma Samaj, from which so much was expected in overthrowing the superstition of that country, and in making a way for the advance of the truth. He is a man of learning and ability, having enjoyed a thorough English education, together with the advantage of European travel. He occasionally appears before the public, and always excites interest and hope in thoughtful minds that his inquiries in regard to the highest subjects of thought may yet bring him into the true and full light of the gospel.

He recently delivered a lecture in the Town Hall of Calcutta on the suggestive topic, "Who is Christ?" He stated frankly that he was not a Christian, but confessed that he must speak of Christ, and that his love of Christ constrained him to speak of Him, and his loyalty to Him was his only apology. India, he said, needs Christ, and eagerly and earnestly asks, "Who is this Christ whose ideas and institutions are taking their root on all sides in our soil?"

Perhaps there is no more impressive proof of the power with which Christian thought is penetrating the leading minds of India than the following passage from this lecture. When educated Indians can openly and fearlessly avow such radical ideas to their countrymen, it ought to silence the silly taunt that missionaries are effecting nothing by their lives and labours.

"Who rules India? What power is it that sways the destinies of India at the present moment? You are mistaken if you think that it is the ability of Lord Lytton in the cabinet, or the military genius of Sir Frederick Haines in the field, that rules India. It is not politics; it is not diplomacy that has laid a firm hold of the Indian heart. It is not the glittering bayonet nor the fiery cannon that influences us. No, none of these can hold India in subjection. Armies never conquered the heart of a nation. You cannot deny that your hearts have been touched, conquered, and subjugated by a superior power. That power is Christ. Christ rules British India, and not the British government. England has sent us a tremendous moral force in the life and character of that mighty Prophet to conquer and hold this vast empire. None but Jesus! none but Jesus! none but Jesus! ever deserved this bright, this precious diadem—India; and Christ shall have it."—*N. Y. Christian Weekly.*

BESEECHING.

The Gospel contains few commands, but many entreaties. Jesus invited, persuaded, exhorted, but seldom commanded. Miraculous mercies were not given on condition of service, but in general zeal to relieve the distress. If the healed became loyal to their Redeemer it was not from compulsion, but from the choice of their own hearts, the voluntary love and gratitude of their own souls. In the same spirit the apostles taught. Their letters to the churches abound in counsel, advice, entreaty, warning, invitation, promise, but the language of authority is seldom used. This fact denotes the genius of the Christian system and Christian life. The service of Christ is, pre-eminently, freedom. Arbitrary rules, exact regulations, specific organization, uniform prescriptions, are unknown, and great liberty for every believer is allowed, the chief restraint being the internal force of love responding to the gentle beseechings and advice of the inspired Word. Thus the Lord begins at the heart and works out; relies upon love rather than law; takes away the love of sin, and thus removes the terror of the law, makes men free from wicked purposes, so that commands are not needed, since persuasion is effective.

THERE is a growing feeling in England and Wales in favour of shutting up public houses on Sundays. Petitions in support of the bill to accomplish this object have been extensively circulated and numerously signed.